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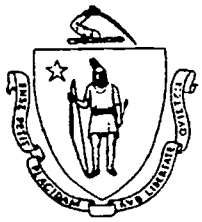
ABSTRACT

This publication, which is based on the experiences gained in a workplace literacy program for learning-disabled workers at a paper factory in Massachusetts, is designed as a beginners' guide to identifying and addressing issues of learning disabilities in the adult education classroom. Section 1 defines the term "learning disability," lists common identifying characteristics of learning-disabled students, and briefly discusses assessment options (oral interviews and testing). The history of the development of the learning disabilities component of the workplace literacy program at Hampden Papers, Inc., is outlined in Section 2. Discussed in the section on methods and materials are accommodation, phonics instruction, lesson formats and materials, activities extending beyond phonics instruction, and classroom applications. Section 4 profiles four participants in the Hampden Papers workplace literacy program who have learning disabilities. Each profile contains the following: information on the student's school, family/personal, and work background; testing and diagnosis results; and intervention strategies used. Included in Section 5 are a student intake assessment instrument and a list of 26 phonics-based materials, training and background materials, testing instruments and learning styles inventories, testing sites, and resource organizations. (MN)

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



Department of Education

LEARNING DIFFERENTLY IN ADULT EDUCATION: DEVELOPMENT OF A LEARNING DISABILITIES COMPONENT AT HAMPDEN PAPERS, INC.

SEPTEMBER 1993

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Department of Education

350 Main Street, Malden, Massachusetts 02148-5023

(617) 388-3300
(617) 388-3392 Fax

Robert V. Antonucci
Commissioner

September, 1993

I am pleased to present this publication developed through our Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative. This publication is part of a series of resources developed for and by workplace education practitioners in business, education, and labor partnerships funded through our Department's Workplace Literacy Program.

These resources are the result of our commitment to strengthening the capacity, knowledge base, and quality of the field and to provide much-needed and long-awaited information on highly-innovative and replicable practices. These resources also complement the curriculum framework of staff training and development initiatives that were successfully developed and piloted in conjunction with the field during the past fiscal year and represent an oustanding example of the Department's theme: " Working Together for Better Results."

Each of these publications was written by trainers and workshop presenters who have participated in the training of new workplace education staff. All publications provide invaluable information on important aspects of workplace education programming. All documents begin with an overview of the field or current-state-of-the-art section as it relates to the topic at hand. Then, they move into the practitioner's experience. Next, the training plan of presenters is discussed. Each publication ends with a list of resources.

We are confident that with this series of publications we have begun an exciting but challenging journey that will further support workplaces in their progression towards becoming high-performance work organizations.

Sincerely,

Robert V. Antonucci

Robert V. Antonucci
Commisioner of Education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Individuals, groups, and organizations that helped in the development of this document:

Janice Rogers, Bob Bozarjian, Johan Uvin
Hampden County Employment and
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Hampden Papers, Inc.

WORKPLACE EDUCATION RESOURCE SERIES:

Workplace Education Mentoring Pilot Project Final Report
17419-82-150-9/93-DOE

Workplace Education Sample Evaluation Report
17420-30-150-9/93-DOE

Workplace Education Mini-Course Pilot Project Final Report
17421-44-150-9/93-DOE

Transforming the Training Manual into a Learning Experience
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Math in the Workplace
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Learning Differently in Adult Education: Development of a Learning Disabilities Component At Hampden Papers, Inc.
17424-43-150-9/93-DOE

The Role of Counseling in Workplace Education:
Educational and Career Counseling at New England Medical Center
17425-66-150-9/93-DOE

September 15, 1993

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INTRODUCTION

It is estimated that between 10 and 15 per cent of the general population has a learning disability. It may be mild or severe, affecting their lives to varying degrees. Learning disabilities are genetically linked, and are more prevalent in males. They may, however, skip a generation. If adult education programs are working primarily with people who were not successful in public school, then it is likely that the incidence of learning disabilities in these programs is much higher than in the general population. As adult educators we should therefore expect to find people with learning disabilities in our classes.

In a factory setting such as Hampden Papers, Inc. which has a largely unskilled male labor force, the likelihood of finding people with learning disabilities is even greater. The Workplace Education Program at Hampden Papers is run by the International Language Institute of Massachusetts, Inc. It began in 1988 with funding from the Department of Employment and Training through the Massachusetts Workplace Education Initiative. Although a small program, it has served annually approximately 10% of the hourly workforce, mostly male machine operators who had dropped out of school. It evolved from a class format to an individualized learning center, with four computers with computer-assisted learning software and word and data processing capabilities. ABE, GED, ESL, college preparation, and limited job training are offered. A tutorial component for workers with learning disabilities was added in 1992, and served four people. When the funding period ended in August, 1993, the workplace program was suspended because of lack of money. It may be reinstated in 1994.

This publication is intended as a beginners' guide to identifying and addressing issues of learning disabilities in the adult education classroom and is based on my experience in a workplace environment. The teaching I did in the learning disabilities component lasted for slightly more than one year, and my observations of the effectiveness of the materials I used are based solely on that time period. I lean toward a linguistic-phonetic approach to reading instruction, a bias adopted from the professionals I have trained with and the majority of workshops I have attended in the past two years. I recognize that there are other approaches to teaching reading using whole-language techniques that would be appropriate for many students with learning disabilities. The phonics program I chose to work with gave me a better understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of one linguistic-phonetic approach to reading instruction, and provided a base from which I could experiment and expand. Had I had the opportunity to work

with the students in a larger class environment, I would have employed many other methods of engaging them in reading and writing activities.

This is only a start in answering the question, How can I best work with my students who have learning disabilities? My work on this question in the future will center on alternative approaches to teaching reading and writing, using manipulatives to teach math, and accommodating students with learning disabilities in a larger, integrated class. Any comments on the work I have presented here, or on the areas I mentioned above are welcome.

My thanks to Alexis Johnson, Janis Johnson, Tim Rees, Johan Uvin and Bob Bozarjian for their encouragement and assistance in editing this publication. Special thanks go to David Drake, who has served as my mentor in the field of learning disabilities, and as a catalyst to my continued studies.

Janice Rogers
International Language Institute of Mass., Inc.
17 New South Street
Northampton, MA 01060

A LEARNING DISABILITIES PRIMER:
Definitions, Characteristics, and Assessment

WHAT IS A LEARNING DISABILITY?

In general terms, a learning disability is the inability of a person with average or above intelligence to process information in the same way as the majority of people. It is not an inability to learn; rather it requires that the person with the disability use other means of achieving the end of comprehension. Dyslexia is one such disability. It is broadly defined as a language processing disorder manifesting itself as extreme difficulty in reading, writing, spelling, and sometimes math.

A language-learning disability is presumed to be caused by an abnormality in the brain that interferes with the integration of verbal and/or nonverbal abilities. The brain is separated into two hemispheres. The right hemisphere is thought to be responsible for recognizing patterns and shapes (such as sight words), getting the whole picture of something, understanding abstract ideas, problem solving, and appreciating music and art. The left hemisphere is believed to process information analytically, step by step: it handles language functions such as grammar, syntax, and phonics. It is thought that people with language-learning disabilities are using the right side of their brains for the work the left side is supposed to be doing, hence their problems with sound-symbol connections, dropping endings, or reading "spot" for "stop". The sequence of letters, or symbols, is not considered by the right side of the brain.

Dyslexia can be characterized by reversals and difficulty in sequencing of letters or numbers. Students may also have strange spelling errors, poor handwriting and written expression, and difficulty in deriving meaning from the printed word or performing mathematical calculations. It is this particular disability that was diagnosed in learners at Hampden Papers, and therefore the focus of this publication.

CHARACTERISTICS OF ADULTS WITH LEARNING DISABILITIES

Teachers tend to teach to the majority, and the person who learns differently is often left out. The isolation and frustration suffered by students with learning disabilities at their difficulty in learning what their peers are learning with ease can lead to behavioral problems in class which teachers are often not equipped to handle. An inexperienced teacher might recognize the intelligence of these students, and assume that their poor performance in class is due to an attitudinal problem. The students may find themselves being pushed ahead in school despite failure because of the teacher's unwillingness to deal with them for another year. They commonly suffer from poor self-esteem and may drop out of school altogether if not given appropriate help. The video by Richard LaVoie, "F.A.T City", is an excellent resource for teachers, parents, and students. It demonstrates through role play what it is like to be learning disabled, and what effects the condition can have on behavior. (See Resources)

In identifying a learning disability, other factors which would inhibit learning must be ruled out, i.e. emotional problems, lack of opportunity to learn, mental retardation and modal impairment, eg. deafness or blindness. One of the most noticeable things about students with learning disabilities is the discrepancy between their apparent potential and actual performance in the classroom. For example, someone who articulately discusses an issue may be able to produce only one written sentence on the subject. Another person who successfully runs a business may not be able to spell numbers accurately enough to write checks.

There are many types and degrees of learning disabilities. Some of the signs of language-processing disabilities, including dyslexia, which you can look for in your students are listed below:

1. <u>Poor and inconsistent spelling.</u>
   Some typical errors might be:

poeple / people	wen / when
raine / rain	kit / kite
truble / trouble	mounth / month
conrty / country	gril / girl
rember / remember	Saturesday/Saturday

   These errors show some knowledge of spelling patterns, but an inability to apply them. The last two examples also demonstrate a reliance on visual memory of the words without the complete understanding of the sound system of English, and therefore phonemes or syllables in a word are added and subtracted incorrectly. A word will

typically be misspelled in different ways in the same piece of writing.

2. **Letter, symbol, and word reversals.**
Some examples are:

b / d	3 / 5
saw / was	396 / 369

In writing, the student may form letters from bottom to top or right to left.

3. **Poor word attack skills.**
In oral and silent reading, students may guess at a word not in their visual memory using some of the letters in the word. For example, they might read:

pretty for party	relation for relative
subtract for subject	tick for thick

These mistakes will interfere with comprehension of the written material even at very low reading levels. Word attack skills are essential for reading at more advanced levels such as in GED preparation or technical job-training manuals.

4. **Good oral, but poor written expression.**
An otherwise articulate person may write a sentence such as this one:

"I'am a man now helding lot of probed and I want to sowell then and life a happe life."
(I am a man now holding a lot of problems, and I want to solve them and live a happy life.)

5. **Poor organization of time and space.**
Students may often be late or unable to accomplish tasks within a given time period. They may have trouble using forms or putting information or answers in the right place on a page.

6. **Restlessness, or slowness in work and reactions.**
Both extremes are possible. Students may need to move around a lot in class or at work, and may be unable to stay with a task for any length of time. Conversely, they may stay with a task for much longer than necessary, or respond slowly in conversation or when given instructions.

7. **Directionality confusion.**
This can be confusion of left and right, north/south east/west, cursor movement on a computer, or sequence of instructions.

In the Profiles section I have provided descriptions of some of the students I have worked with at Hampden Papers which highlight some groupings of these characteristics. Some helpful checklists of characteristics can be found in the references so indicated in the section on Resources. Not everyone with a learning disability will show all the characteristics on a list, which can make identification difficult. I have found, however, that some of the characteristics I missed early in working with a student showed up later in intensive one-on-one tutorials.

ASSESSMENT

In addition to your observations of a student with regard to the characteristics mentioned in the previous section, there are other ways of determining whether an individual has a learning disability.

Oral Interviews

Oral interviews with the students will provide good information which can help adult educators in assessment. In the appendix there is a sample intake form which I found useful in bringing out pertinent information. The school background of the students and their families can provide some insight on specific areas of disability. They may have been in special education classes or received tutoring; they may have done well in music, art, shop, or science, but performed poorly in English and math. Students from other countries or language backgrounds in all likelihood will show similar patterns of problems in school if they have a learning disability.

Adults will have made many adaptations if they have a disability: their spouse may do all the record keeping and handle finances; they may pay all their bills in cash and not keep a checking account at all. Dates may be all in numbers, or all abbreviated. They will be able to tell you what many of their strengths and weaknesses are, and what they avoid doing. They may have found a job that allows them to move around within the workplace, or one which requires little paperwork that isn't completed with a partner. One student with dyslexia at Hampden Papers was promoted to a position which requires fairly sophisticated problem-solving and measurement skills although he failed the aptitude test for the job. Management assumed that there was something wrong with him on the day he took the test. In fact, he is unable to do calculations without a calculator, and was not allowed to use one during the test. His job performance has been excellent.

Testing

Testing is a more definitive means of assessment. It can be done in-house or at a test center. The latter is essential if students need specific accommodations at work, at college, or to get a license. If workers need to have a training manual read to them instead of reading it themselves when learning a new job, if they need extra time allowance to take the GED exams, or if they need to do all their essays on tape at college, they would have to have an official diagnosis of a learning disability. In the appendix are names of some test centers. Free testing can be done at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission.

For my purposes and those of an adult education or workplace education program, official testing is usually not essential. Other less formal test batteries are sufficient. These tests determine whether the students have internalized the sound system of English, if they can read unfamiliar words out of context, understand passages when read silently, and spell correctly. They also check student knowledge of vocabulary, and ability to comprehend spoken words and passages. This information can pinpoint the students' strengths and weaknesses, and where interventions should start.

The testing that was done with the students in the Hampden Papers program will be described in the next section on the development of the learning disabilities component.

COMPONENT BACKGROUND

EARLY DISCREPANCIES

The first workers who attended classes in the Hampden Papers workplace education program expressed a primary interest in developing their writing and reading skills. When pressed to identify what types of writing and reading interested them, a common response was "spelling" and "reading all the words". This would now be a indicator to me that the person might be lacking fundamental phonics skills. At the time, however, I dismissed spelling as being an issue secondary to the skill of written expression, and focused on process writing with some attention to spelling rules.

In the writing of many of the students, I saw poorly developed ideas as well as weak grammar and erratic spelling which did not noticeably improve with direct instruction. The reading abilities of these same students stumped me; while they could get the general idea of a News for You article or a passage written at a 5th or 6th grade reading level, they would miss key points and details and be unable to read aloud the now-familiar piece with any fluency or apparent comprehension. These people had tested in a 5th to 8th grade range on the TABE reading comprehension test which was more academic and presumably more difficult than the practical, lifeskills-oriented material I provided in class, so I could not understand where their difficulty lay.

I tried a text series designed for literacy programs with one of the men, who thought it was helpful. I saw no retention of the skills worked on, however. At least two of the students told me that they had trouble sounding out the words they didn't know, so we worked on breaking new words into syllables and looking at spelling patterns such as "ough", "ight", and silent "e". Although this would turn out to be close to the tack I needed to take with this group of learners, what I did not do, and what the materials I was using did not do, was to provide the repetition and practice to help them internalize what they were supposed to be learning. While the majority of workers in the program made noticeable progress in their skills and learned to apply rules and patterns with relative ease, the remaining students had great difficulty in this area.

I attributed the problems to my inexperience in teaching reading and writing to native English speakers, the students' weak academic skills from having dropped out of high school, and their returning to school after a break of several years. It wasn't until one of the students was fired due to poor work performance that the issue of learning disabilities was raised.

The student was rehired on the condition that he attend class more regularly. My instructions were to help him build his basic reading and writing skills rather than focus on

specifically work-related skills. We worked through some phonics materials I already had in the workplace library and did some listening discrimination exercises focusing on identifying differences between minimal pairs such as th/f and sh/s. In retrospect I understand that the work he did did not get him to use all learning channels (all ways of taking in the information: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile) and was not repeated enough to have it "stick".

When the concerns I had about him and others in the class were raised at a Workplace Education Advisory Board meeting, there was particular interest on the part of Hampden Papers' management because of the new Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) which requires "reasonable accommodation" of people with disabilities in the workplace. I was encouraged to seek training in the area of learning disabilities in order to partially accommodate workers who might identify themselves as learning disabled.

LOOKING INTO LEARNING DISABILITIES

At state and national conferences, I began attending workshops on identifying learning disabilities and learning styles. Presenters stressed the benefit of appealing to all of a student's senses, or modalities, when introducing and practicing new material. This was helpful as a general guideline as to what to do in class. Checklists of the characteristics of people with learning disabilities were also helpful, but overwhelming, because I had not worked closely enough with the students to recognize many behaviors on the lists. The checklists were also misleading because I got the impression from them that I needed to be able to see a majority of the characteristics listed to be able to identify a learning disability. This was not the case. Also, although when considering a student I might be able to see groupings of characteristics in a particular area, I was not clear as to what kind of remediation was appropriate.

Hampden Papers was willing to have two students officially tested at the Curtis Blake Center in Springfield in order to pinpoint any disabilities, but, again, training in appropriate teaching strategies and materials was not part of the process. In addition, the Advisory Board had some concerns as to what effect the testing results and accompanying label would have on the students and their careers.

At a Literacy Volunteers Network meeting on learning disabilities, I met David Drake, the Headmaster of the White Oak School for learning-disabled adolescents in Springfield. He concurred that official testing was probably unnecessary

for my purposes in working with the students in the classroom. He offered to do a less formal evaluation of all the students active in the program, as well as provide me with specific follow-up training. The cost would amount to much less than having only two students tested elsewhere, and would avoid any stigma attached to the formal label.

A concern that the Advisory Board had as we moved closer to identifying students with learning disabilities was the issue of privacy of information. To prevent the student from being labeled, and protect the company in cases of unsuccessful job bids, disciplinary actions, and firings, management did not want to have access to the results of David Drake's evaluation. As a result, test results were not given to the company. The files on the students were not even kept at the factory to ensure that the company kept a legal distance from the information. I did not give the students a diagnosis of their reading difficulty, either, because it was not official and had been done only for the purpose of training me to help them better. I did try to help them understand how they learned differently, and therefore why they experienced such difficulty with reading and writing.

IDENTIFICATION OF STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE-LEARNING DIFFERENCES

In March of 1992, David Drake met for approximately one and a half hours with each of the 8 students active in the program. The evaluation consisted of the following:

1. An oral interview similar to the one included in the Appendix,
2. the Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT), and
3. the Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (DAR).

The SORT tests the ability of the students to read orally words in isolation with no context clues, thereby checking their knowledge of the English sound system. The DAR includes several subtests in oral and silent reading, vocabulary recognition, and word attack skills. The rationale for doing these tests is that they uncover any weaknesses in the students' understanding of sound/symbol correlation in English, and therefore their ability to decode (read) new words in a passage. A lack of decoding skills inhibits the students' ability to tackle more advanced material, or progress from "learning to read", to the "reading to learn" phase of reading development. The vocabulary tests indicate whether the students have the potential to do higher-level reading, or whether they need an enrichment program. People with reading disabilities often have excellent vocabularies, but are unable to read the words they know.

Based on his experience and the results of the oral interview, the SORT, and the DAR, David identified three of the eight workers evaluated as showing weaknesses "consistent with students with severe dyslexia". He prescribed a linguistic-phonetic approach to teaching reading and writing/spelling, a discussion of which follows in the next section.

My first step in creating a component for students with learning disabilities, was to get some specific training. I visited the White Oak School during the summer to observe tutorials, talk with David, and look at materials in the school library. The observations were the most useful for me, providing me with a sense of the range of reading disabilities, and the structure and consistency needed in lesson planning and presentation. In addition, they provided a pertinent model from which I could design tutorials for Hampden Papers.

My next step was to arrange time for the identified workers to have a private class with me. This would minimize distractions and reduce possible discomfort at having other students see some of the materials and techniques used. The students in the program were expected to attend class on their own time, before or after their shifts. As I was the only teacher when the component started up, I had to arrange work release time for the identified students so that I would be available during peak hours for the rest of the group. This was not a problem for the other students in the program because everyone recognized that there was a wide range of skill levels and need for my attention. There were often as many as 10 people in class at a time, all working individually.

The final step was to determine an approach to remediation, and choose materials. This is described in the next section.

METHODS AND MATERIALS

METHODS

Accommodation in the context of disabilities refers to any changes made to counter the disability in order to allow a person to more easily accomplish a task at work, at school, or in the community. Because I was not going to be working with the students with learning disabilities in an integrated classroom, I was able instead to take a remedial tack which I hoped would better prepare the students for self-sufficiency and more advanced academic work.

Considering the severe nature of the reading disabilities of the students we had identified, I decided to begin with a phonics-based reading and spelling program as David Drake had suggested rather than use a whole-language approach.

Students with or without language disabilities learn differently from each other. A whole language approach to teaching reading and writing appeals to these differences by stimulating all of the students' senses, encouraging them to experience the language. Students hear books on a particular subject read to them, and then dictate their ideas to the teacher creating their own, meaningful, reading material. They do projects, watch films, and go on field trips to learn more about the subject. This is a rich learning environment in which students can take in information in many ways, and in which they can "naturally" learn to read and write, without direct instruction.

Students with language learning disabilities will not typically learn to read and write (encode, or spell) this way, however. Dorothy van den Honert writes, "...one thing is sure: a teacher must somehow train students to start doing the kind of analytical and serial processing which is essential for handling written language-- processing which occurs automatically in a standard brain, but must be drilled, step by step, into the dyslexic's brain." (Reading from Scratch Teacher's Manual, page 4)

Phonics instruction provides the students with a base from which to expand their knowledge and use of language. Multisensory (auditory, visual, and kinesthetic/tactile) techniques for teaching phonics reinforce the information in different ways, encouraging students to strengthen the different learning pathways, and at the same time appealing to the students' different learning styles. It does not have to supplant whole language techniques, but I believe phonics should be included as a crucial part of reading and writing instruction for students with language-learning disabilities. An excellent examination of this issue is in the article on whole language reading instruction by Nancy Mather, listed in the Resource section.

The students in the workplace education program would first

learn to read, therefore, by decoding words, then gain fluency and move on to more advanced materials. I could not predict the duration of the process or the effectiveness of the materials that I had found for the students in the program as it was my first experience with them. Because the student's attendance was often irregular because of home and work schedule conflicts, I knew the process could be slow moving. I expected that a solid grounding in phonics would enable them to study more effectively, and that it would give them more confidence at work and outside of work. An excellent discussion of this issue

LESSON FORMAT AND MATERIALS

To begin with, I tutored the identified students following guidelines from David Drake's written evaluations. The activities for each one-hour session for the first two months were as follows:

1. **Sequences for rote memorization** - days, months, and numbers, practiced through word completion exercises.

   For example:

   Tue_da_ Tu__d__ T___d__ T_____ _____

2. **Spelling rules** - taken from Elsie Rak, The Spell of Words (consonant doubling, silent "e", for example)

3. **Phonics** - reading and dictation from Let's Read book 3, focusing on the consonant-vowel-consonant pattern for short vowel practice

   For example:

   -ed bed fed led Ned wed
   -id bid did hid lid rid

4. **Extended reading** - high interest-low level readers, books on tape. Teacher and student took turns reading out loud.

5. **Handwriting** - proper letter formation and cursive writing.

The rationale for the number of activities done in the one-hour tutorial period is that students with learning disabilities seem to absorb information better in "sound bytes", or small pieces, which are repeated on a regular basis. The heart of the tutorials was the phonics work, while the work on sequences and oral reading from structured readers was included to build self-sufficiency and maintain

interest. Although I encouraged the students to bring reading material from home or work, no one actually brought anything in.

The work we did in class, though simple, exercised the three sensory pathways: auditory, visual, and tactile. I encouraged the students to:

* say the letters as they wrote them, and trace on a rough surface any difficult or new word while saying the letters (auditory/tactile),

* read aloud or voice words while reading "silently", and listen to oral reading from the teacher or books on tape (visual/auditory), and

* copy words and letters (visual/tactile).

The students were developing a cognitive awareness of the written structure of English through learning the spelling rules. They were expected to understand why a word was spelled a certain way, and to apply that rule without relying on a weak visual memory.

I became dissatisfied with the Let's Read series for two reasons. One, it did not provide a rationale for the sequence of lessons, and I was unclear as to how to place the students in the series, where it was leading, and how to supplement it. Two, as it was not designed specifically for adults, it had a low interest level for my students. It is argued that people with a reading disability need to begin working at their true level of competence, meaning that their actual reading level is likely to be considerably lower than their comprehension and interest level. The sentences and stories in phonics-based readers use only the patterns already learned. This can limit the scope of the material, its interest for an adult. **"Mat sat on a red sled and had a snack"** is a challenge for my students to read, but is hardly worth the effort!

I explored other materials from Educators Publishing Service in Cambridge, the most useful of which was the adult-oriented Reading from Scratch series by Dorothy van den Honert. The scope of the series and rationale for the exercises is clearly laid out, and helpful to a beginner in learning disabilities.

The program backtracks to the alphabet and the sounds of all the letters (which I had mistakenly assumed the students knew and could apply), then works on combining each with the short vowels in sequence.

va-av ed-de but-tub stop-pots

This proved so challenging to the students that we remained at that level of reading for as long as a month. The potential for frustration at not being able to read seemingly easy words was great, and we would discuss on a daily basis the difficulty in sequencing and attaching sound to letter in order to help them see the need for the work.

Again, the patterns were learned not by rote, but through cognitive study of the rules. The students had to sound out words letter by letter, learning to rely on the sound of each letter within a specific environment. Lists of familiar rhyming words **(mat, sat, hat, or map, cap, tap)** were easy for the students until a less familiar word such as **"vat"** or **"zap"** appeared; it was clear that they could not follow the sound pattern (rhyme) of the word, rather these were totally new words that needed sounding out. Without a cognitive understanding of the sound system of English, they would stumble on one-syllable words, and most certainly on many unfamiliar multi-syllabic words found in newspapers, magazines, or popular fiction which they might read.

The readings in Reading from Scratch are controlled as they are in the Let's Read series, but more sophisticated in content.

> **"A wisp of fog left the wet sand as the sun set"**
> (RfS Phonics, p.7)

When we got to this stage of reading sentences, I could see obvious improvement in the students' ability to apply the phonics rules they had learned.

With the RfS program, we altered the tutorial format as follows:

* **letter/sound practice** - using plastic letters and later phonics cards, students would provide the sound of a letter or digraph (eg. th, ph, sh), or find the letter to match the sound modeled by the teacher
* **reading practice** - RfS Phonics
* **ear training** - the teacher models a word, the student identifies the number of sounds in the word, for example, "path" has 3 sounds, **/p/ /a/ /0/**
* **dictation** of words practiced, and of sentences using known patterns
* **workbook exercises** (to practice sound patterns and discrimination of similar sounds)
* **oral reading/books on tape**

The heart of each lesson was still the phonics-based reading. We would spend between 15 minutes and half an hour on the reading, depending on the student's attention level that day. I eliminated the work we had been doing on individual spelling rules, because the rules were part of the phonics work and reinforced through the RfS workbooks. I also stopped working on rote memorization of sequences such as days and numbers in the interest of time to build the phonics base for each student. I was finding the one-hour period to be very short.

BEYOND PHONICS

After developing a phonics base in short vowels with the students, I decided to add some activities to the lessons, which we could alternate with the extended reading activities described above. We began doing dialogue journals in which the students and I would write back and forth to each other. Mistakes didn't "count"; communication did. This seemed to free the students somewhat, and they did not hesitate to write at least a sentence or two each time.

One man enjoyed the dialogue journal so much that he began doing the same thing at home with his first-grader. His skill in communicating clearly in writing improved markedly over a 3-month period, including more accurate spelling and syntax, and better development of his ideas. He wrote best when left undisturbed until he indicated that he was finished, often as long as 30 minutes. Before he left the program after one year of work, he expressed an interest in writing poetry.

Another process I tried with one student was language experience stories. I wanted him to work on extended readings of interest to him, and decided to use his personal experiences as his reading material. He would tell me about his activities outside of work, and I would write them in his notebook, word for word. If I tried to correct what he said, he would usually read it back to me according to his **original** phrasing, so I learned to leave his words alone. He enjoyed the activity, and had some retention of difficult vocabulary over time. The process was very time consuming and he frequently missed lessons, so I dropped the stories in favor of working with the phonics material which would give him a more solid foundation for reading. In a larger class, or in a longer lesson period, I would continue using language experience stories with all my students. If self-esteem is an issue with students with learning disabilities, then this is a way of validating their words and their experience, and using them to enhance learning.

With another of the students I began to do some basic math for job purposes. He was interested in bidding on a

different job in the factory, but all possible positions required an ability to measure. We used pie charts and homemade, enlarged rulers to illustrate the concept of fractions. We practiced measuring using estimation, a factory tape measure, and our homemade ruler. We had some short-term success with these methods, but he had little retention over time. He certainly would have benefited from the demonstration of math concepts using more manipulatives such as Cuisenaire rods. One of my next steps is to get training in this area. I had planned to work on reading factory production tickets with the same student for job bidding purposes, but he dropped out of the program at that point.

The other activity I did with all the students at some point in their work with me was to introduce them to the computer. In some cases this meant simply word processing: taking the writings they had done in class and transcribing them on to the computer. In one case, a student was able to work on data processing, creating a database for a video collection. He showed exceptional skill on the computer, and used the word processor to write his autobiography. He found it freed him from the physical act of writing, and allowed him to express his thoughts better. Some of the students also used the application software we had available to us: "Carmen San Diego" (Broderbund), "Math Blaster Plus" (Davidson), and "Spell It Plus" (Davidson), for example. The games proved to be an enjoyable alternative activity for them.

Despite frequent frustration with the phonics work, two students have reported that it has really worked for them, by enabling them to read in situations where they had had trouble previously. One of the men reports that he is able to decode more easily now, at work and outside of the factory. He is able to read labels and instructions on the boxes he moves around the factory and give the information to his supervisor, something which eluded him before. He was dependent on his supervisor's help, which slowed down his work. He is also able to read signs in restaurants and elsewhere in the community which he ignored before. He says that his reading is slow, but that he is confident that he is reading correctly.

In January, after about 6 month's participation in class, the other man reported that he could decode road signs more easily. This is necessary when he travels long distances to sports events in which he competes. Previously, he had to pull over on the road to read the signs. Even after a lapse in attendance of over six months, he still reports that his reading has improved, and that he is more competent in his job. He seems to have retained what he did, without further direct reinforcement.

Although the students showed clear improvement using the

Reading from Scratch series, I felt the series lacked adequate extended reading practice. I have since been introduced to the Wilson Reading System which provides an ample amount of such practice at the adult level.

CLASSROOM APPLICATIONS

Students with learning disabilities need time, individualized attention, much repetition and varied practice of all material, and a carefully sequenced presentation of new material. Those with dyslexia may benefit from a phonics-based reading system.

How can these needs be accommodated in an integrated classroom setting? Ideally, any phonics-based reading program should be done individually. This is preferable so that the teacher can closely monitor each student's progress and modify the tutorial according to the mistakes made, and so that the students can work at their own pace with no pressure or distractions. Students must develop their own language base in order to "catch up" and be able to hold their own in a classroom setting. This is not compatible with group work at the very low levels of students such as those at Hampden Papers. In a workplace setting, arranging for release time at other than class time is a possibility. Using teacher aides, volunteers, or part-time staff to work with the class while you tutor the students with learning disabilities is ideal.

For the remainder of the time, these students can be a part of the larger class. Guidelines for teaching to these special needs are also guidelines for good teaching in any situation:

1. **Break a skill down into its component parts and teach in micro-units.** If the student is working on combining short vowels with consonants, make sure you first work on the individual consonant and short vowel sounds, and that you do single consonants before tackling consonant blends such as "st" or "tr".

2. **Start from the students' true level of competence.** Although they can get the gist of a newspaper article, make sure they know the alphabet in sequence, and the sounds that all the letters make. Don't assume anything.

3. **Practice the skill until it is automatic.** Even though students may "understand" the lesson one day, it does not mean that they will know it the next. Have the students practice a skill until they can use it without thinking about it.

4. **Spiral the curriculum - build on, recycle, and reinforce skills already learned.** For example, when the students knows the single consonant sounds, move to consonant blends of two, then three letters. Short vowel patterns and consonant blends are reinforced when you move on to multi-syllabic words using all short vowels, such as "independent". Integrate material you have taught before with the new material being learned.

5. **Use all the sensory channels in teaching: visual, auditory, and kinesthetic/tactile.** Students take in information best in different ways, but need to develop other paths for learning new things. Let the students hear how a word sounds, see how it is written, and feel how it is to write it themselves. Let them say the words to themselves as they read, or listen to the story read on tape; let them trace a difficult word on a rough surface with their fingers while they sound it out; let them move around the room while practicing the sounds of the letters. Make sure that all assignments are written on the board for students to copy as well as hear, or that they are handed out on paper if someone has trouble copying accurately. Present everything in a variety of ways, to reach the majority of people.

These are excellent guidelines for **all** teachers, and will help you reach as many of your students as possible by appealing to different learning styles, academic strengths and weaknesses, and by giving everyone a chance to succeed in some way. Learning styles inventories can point out a student's preferences for group or individual learning, auditory or visual input, and oral, written, or creative project work. This feedback can be very useful in designing your class and organizing how, and if, students will work together. See Resources at the end of the publication for names of two inventories.

STUDENT PROFILES

Student names and identifying information have been changed for the purpose of privacy.

I. "Dave"

BACKGROUND

School

Dave dropped out of vocational high school in 10th grade. While in school, he received some specialized help. His long-term goal is to get his GED.

He joined the workplace education program in September, 1990. We decided to work on getting his reading level up to where he could begin GED preparation. I tried level readers such as the Scott Foresman Adult Reading series, but his comprehension was erratic. He was unable to follow the format in the book for answering questions, and didn't see patterns. We worked on the skill of following text and using a workbook to write answers. It seemed hard for him to retain what he had done from one day to the next. Over a 6-month period, there was some improvement in these academic skills.

His spelling was also erratic; some days he could spell more difficult words (night, would), but would omit letters and syllables from simpler ones (think for thinking, wen for went). Other days, the mistakes would be entirely different. He seemed to have many sight words, but would add an "e" to words such as "drop".

Dave didn't know his multiplication tables, so we worked on memorizing them using a times table. He progressed as far as 7. We worked on the meaning of fractions and how to add and subtract them. He was able to work with the fractions to some degree, but didn't retain the skill and couldn't apply the information. We worked on measuring, but he was unable to read a ruler more specifically than half-and sometimes quarter-inch markings, or consistently demonstrate an understanding of the makeup of a ruler.

Showing great organizational difficulty, he was unclear about the idea of before/after and left/right, or compass directions. We worked on map reading and some geography along with reading comprehension.

Family/Personal

Dave wears thick glasses, and we discussed whether his prescription was appropriate. His eye doctor said that his vision was adjusted the best it could be. He was one of eleven children in his family, and there was not enough money

for glasses until after he left school. There are other health problems in his family. His parents and brothers are alcoholics, his sister is a paraplegic. His brother-in-law is probably dyslexic, and there are some signs that his son may have difficulty in school.

He wants to be able to read to his young son and help him with his homework as he gets older. He would also like to be able to read all parts of the newspaper, and forms and other materials he comes across. He can not spell numbers to write checks, and his wife does the bill-paying and accounting for the family.

Work

Dave worked for a local department of public works for 20 years before being laid off. He is currently in a janitorial position in the factory, a job which requires minimal writing and reading, and no math. He reports that he is happier working outside or in a job where he can move around a lot. He is very active and tends to be nervous. He has a good attention span when he is interested in something, however.

About six months after he came to Hampden Papers, he bid on a machine operator's job which required measuring. He bid off of it a few weeks later because he felt too pressured by production quotas and the overall job demands. He was demoralized by the experience, and stopped attending class for a few months.

TESTING and DIAGNOSIS

TABE (Test of Adult Basic Education)		
Reading Comprehension	5.3	9/90
SORT	3.8	3/92
DAR		3/92
Word Attack	2.0	
Oral Reading (sentences)	1.8	
Reading comprehension	2.8	(3.0 scoring base)
Spelling	1.8	
Word meaning	5.0	

I asked Dave if he would be willing to be tested in March of 1992 when David Drake was consulting with us. I had learned enough about learning disabilities at that point to suspect that this was where our difficulties in class lay, although I could not pinpoint his problem or determine how to help him. He tested as having symptoms of severe dyslexia. There was no math test given, but that would seem to be part of his disability.

INTERVENTION

When Dave rejoined the class after being evaluated by David Drake, he began individual tutoring using a linguistic-phonetic approach. He did well with the structured approach, but he responded even better and showed more progress when we began using the Reading from Scratch reading system. He attended regularly until the summer, then stopped attending because of problems at home.

He reports being able to decode more easily now, at work and outside of the factory. He is able to read information on containers and report it to his supervisor. My efforts to help him with measurement and math have not been as successful, however, and I will need training on how to find a "phonics", or step-by-step, approach to math teaching.

For him to be able to achieve his goal, he needs to improve his reading skills on both a phonics level and on an analytical level, and to develop some math "sense". I am not encouraged by the amount of work he has to do, but he is determined to get his GED.

II. "Ron"

BACKGROUND

School

Ron went to a pre-vocational program in 9th grade. He passed, but with a low grade. He studied carpentry, electric, and metal work; however, his mother did not want him to continue in vocational school, so he went to a "regular" high school. He was put in special education classes for English (reading and spelling included), Math and History, but was in a "regular" class for science. General math was ok, but a little rough, he reports. He studied basic computation, fractions, decimals, and percents, but did no geometry or algebra. For spelling, he was taught to memorize words. He also did phonics, and this training is evident in his work in the program now. He also studied grammar, and read aloud out of books. He dropped out of high school in 12th grade with only one month to go. He did not give a reason.

He joined the workplace education program in March of 1989 because he was interested in getting his GED. He clearly recognizes what his difficulties are. In September of '89 he wrote "I will like to read will good. I will like to spell. I will like to sound out words."

When Ron was first in the program, we worked on reading and spelling. He was able to do any exercises given him; following format and directions was not a problem. None of the skills practiced transferred to freer writing, and he consistently tested at the same grade level in reading. He didn't return to the program in September of 1989 after the summer break, but he did show up in January of 1991 and attended a few sessions. He soon dropped out again, until I re-recruited him in September of 1992.

Family/Personal

Ron doesn't use numbers very much. His wife does the bill paying by mail; he pays local bills in person. He can not write the days of the week or months, and reads only the classified ads in the newspaper. He is interested in working with his hands, and helps his wife with a new crafts-making enterprise by cutting wood for the pieces she makes. He is also interested in TV sports and car racing.

He seems slow. His expressive language is limited, and he has a weak vocabulary. He perseverates- he seems to lack the skills to end a conversation, or to call an activity completed. He is repetitive in written and oral style.

He is slow in reacting in conversation, and doesn't

demonstrate much wit or enthusiasm for things. But because of his ability to perform on the job, set priorities, handle an academic format, and organize his school work, notebook, personal life as far as we have discussed, I believe he is of at least average intelligence, and therefore in the category of learning disabled.

Work

Ron began at Hampden Papers as a tank washer, then became a trucker. He often runs machines to fill in for regular operators. He reportedly has good job performance.

TESTING AND DIAGNOSIS

TABE Reading Comprehension	5.4	3/89
TABE Math Computation	5.2	3/89
SORT	4.2	3/92

He was not tested by David Drake in March of 1992. Only after looking back through his file did I realize that he showed similar characteristics to the three people who were identified. When I showed a writing sample he did to David Drake, David concurred that Ron showed signs of dyslexia. I encouraged Ron to rejoin the workplace program and try the Reading from Scratch materials.

INTERVENTION

Ron did rejoin the program in the fall of 1992, and we discussed his probable learning difference. He was happy to follow the RfS material when I explained how it could help his reading. It was familiar to him in format, as he had used similar materials in high school. I suspect that the phonics program in high school was not followed through well enough as he did not see real reading gains at that time.

In addition to the RfS program, we kept a dialogue journal. At one point we tried some language experience stories, which he enjoyed. Time limitations led me back to pure phonics. At some point he will need to begin math work as well if he is to get his GED eventually.

Ron dropped out of the program again this spring because of work demands and the demands of his freelance work at home. He regularly says that he will be in, but does not show up or acknowledge his absence when I next see him. If he were to join the program again, I would try an alternative attack to phonics in order to maintain his interest.

III. "Mark"

BACKGROUND

School

Mark completed high school. He had been in special education classes for some of the time. He apparently studied algebra and geometry, and reports that he did very well. His larger goal is to become a corrections officer, but he has failed the exam twice.

When he was a young child he says he had speech problems, both in Spanish and English, to the point that he was not comprehensible in either language. He saw a speech pathologist before entering school, and continued speech classes in school. He doesn't have any records of what the problem was. He shows some speech problems even now. Some is interference from Spanish, although he is dominant and educated in English. Some seems to be "street" pronunciation (/f/ for "th", for example.) Otherwise, I suspect that he doesn't have good auditory discrimination skills, and can't transfer the sound to the written patterns.

Mark joined the workplace education program in November of 1990. He reported that he was interested in improving his reading and writing skills, and in learning to use the computer. He had terrible difficulty with spelling and writing, and seemed to have no understanding of sound/symbol correlation. We worked on phonics, but he did much of the work on his own, and showed little improvement.

When he was first in the program, he needed help with his accounting books for the business he owns. He had tremendous difficulty putting the numbers in the correct columns, transferring numbers, and understanding what the columns meant. He was slow in doing the computations, which made me suspect a problem with math. Later testing showed a fair grasp of the basics, including fractions, decimals, and percents. He reversed some numbers resulting in computation errors.

I had trouble finding appropriate reading exercises for him. At first I gave him material at his original testing level (8th grade), then later at lower and lower levels due to comprehension difficulty.

Work

Mark's job of choice in the factory is in maintenance, because he likes to fix things and says he is very good at it. He does not have the appropriate training, however, and his supervisors disagree with his estimation of his abilities. He was fired from a machine operator's job in

1991. The conditions of re-hire included attending class, which he did not do regularly because of work and home conflicts. Mark's supervisor said he needed practice reading a ruler (because he made measurement errors regularly on the job), and in reading, writing and spelling. The supervisor also reported that he didn't copy well. The possibility of Mark's having a learning disability was brought up, but Mark decided to drop it as a work-related issue. It is unclear whether he thinks he is learning disabled. He was assigned a trucking job, and had good job performance. About one year later he was promoted to a machine operator's position , and is doing well.

Family/Personal

Mark runs a business, and is trained in martial arts. He is unable to spell his children's names, and needs help to fill out forms.

TESTING AND DIAGNOSIS

TABE Reading Comprehension (took 2 hours)	8.4	11/90
SORT	3.0	3/92
DAR		3/92
Word recognition	2.0	
Oral reading	1.8	
Word attack	below 3rd grade criterion	
Reading comprehension	"	"
Spelling	1.0	
Word meaning	5.0	

David Drake indicated that his language problems were severe, and that he showed only the most minimal ability to decode words. His attempts to read words out of context were often wild, depending only on the first letter. He would also make meaningless guesses at words both in and out of context.

INTERVENTION

Mark has responded well to the RfS program, which we began in the fall of 1992. He reported in January of this year that he was having an easier time decoding road signs, which is necessary for his frequent travel. Before starting the tutorial, he had to pull over on the road to read the signs.

I have also worked with him on auditory discrimination and sound production. He needs much more intensive work in this area, but time limitations forced me to choose only one area to work on for the time being, and the aural/oral difficulties are not a job hindrance *per se.*

Mark has not attended class since sustaining a back injury this winter.

IV. "Sonny"

BACKGROUND

School

Sonny dropped out of high school half-way through his senior year. He was apparently asked to leave because he was not expected to graduate. He had been in special education classes for three years.

He joined the workplace education program in February of 1989 saying that he couldn't read books or the newspaper, only the ads. He provided a ten-minute writing sample that was one sentence long and riddled with spelling errors ("happe" for happy, "prabed" for problems, "sowell" for solve).

We worked from level readers such as the Scott Foresman Adult Reading Series. His general comprehension was usually good, but inconsistent. He often missed details, and had difficulty answering comprehension questions which relied on these details. He moved to higher levels, showing the same inconsistencies, but fair general comprehension.

He brought in "Hooked on Phonics" to use in class, and enjoyed it the few times he used it. We tried other phonics materials, but there was little progress because of his irregular attendance.

Sonny is keenly interested in geography and computers, and showed impressive competence in both areas. He is able to read complicated maps of all kinds. He quickly learned both the word processing and data processing programs available in the classroom, and was easily able to conceptualize how to apply them to his needs and interests. Once familiar with the word processor, he began to write extensively about his life experiences.

His attendance was very irregular. Issues at home often interfered with his time at work.

Family/Personal

There are many health problems in his family. His father was an alcoholic and was abusive. His mother is wheelchair-bound because of diabetes-related problems. He has trouble with alcohol himself, and seems extremely insecure.

He reports that he has eye fatigue if he concentrates on something for an hour or more. At my urging, he went for an eye exam in 1990. He needs glasses, but can't afford them.

Work

Previous to his employment at Hampden, Sonny worked as a doormaker at a local mill. He started in the shipping room at Hampden Papers, then got a machine operator's position. His job performance was erratic, and he had a difficult time staying at his machine. He was fired for job problems, but was conditionally rehired in a different position. This new job was better for him as he could move around the mill all day, but he was fired again within a week for disobeying the rules.

TESTING AND DIAGNOSIS

TABE Reading Comprehension	3.0	2/89
	5.5	6/90
SORT	2.8	3/92
DAR		3/92
Word attack	2.0	
Oral reading	3.0	
Spelling	1.8	
Reading comprehension	4.0	
Oral meaning of words	6.0	

David Drake suggested that Sonny had the potential to do much more advanced word, given a solid grounding in phonics. His vocabulary and oral expressive skills were much higher than the reading and writing skills tested.

INTERVENTION

After Sonny was tested, we began using the Reading from Scratch program. He made laborious but sure progress in combining consonants and short vowels in sequence. It was difficult for him to concentrate on the phonics work, and his attendance continued to be very irregular. He recognized the need for the phonics approach to reading, but was unable to stick with it. He was, in fact, unable to concentrate on anything but his computer work for any length of time. He was not tested for attention deficit disorder, but this may well have been one of his problems. He made little progress in specific skills before he was fired, but he made great gains in his confidence in his own abilities and potential.

RESOURCES AND APPENDIX

RESOURCES FOR LEARNING DISABILITIES

PHONICS-BASED MATERIALS

Reading from Scratch, Dorothy van den Honert, Educators Publishing Service, Cambridge, MA.

Let's Read, Let's Look At, Bloomfield, Barnhart & Barnhart, EPS, Cambridge.

Language Tool Kit, Rome & Osman, EPS, Cambridge. (1992)

A Guide to Teaching Phonics, Judith Lyday Orton, EPS, Cambridge.

The Spell of Words, Elsie Rak, EPS, Cambridge.

Wilson Reading System, Barbara Wilson, Wilson Language Training, 162 W. Main St., Millbury, MA 01527-1943

Starting Over: A Literacy Program, Joan Knight, EPS, Cambridge. (good oral interview form)

TRAINING AND BACKGROUND MATERIALS

F.A.T. City, video, Richard D. Lavoie, Director, Riverview School, East Sandwich, MA. (excellent for parents, teachers)

Teaching Adults with Learning Disabilities, video, University of the State of New York, State Education Department, Albany, NY 12234 (training materials)

A Learning Disabilities Digest for Learning Providers, Learning Disabilities Association of America (address below) (good general pamphlet for teachers with helpful checklist)

Overcoming Dyslexia in Children, Adolescents, and Adults, Dale R. Jordan, Pro-Ed, Austin, Texas. (excellent checklist in back)

Spelling is as Spelling Does, Cheryl McKernan, Helds Project Series, Central Washington University. (excellent "Criterion and Behavioral Checklist")

Brilliant Idiot: Autobiography of a Dyslexic, Dr. Abraham Schmitt, Good Books of Intercourse, 1992.

"Whole Language Reading Instruction for Students with Learning Disabilities: Caught in the Cross Fire", Nancy Mather, Learning Disabilities Research & Practice (1992) 7:87-95. College of Education, University of Arizona, Tucson, AZ 85721.

TESTING INSTRUMENTS and LEARNING STYLES INVENTORIES

Slosson Oral Reading Test (SORT), Slosson Educational Publishers, Aurora, NY.

Diagnostic Assessment of Reading (and Trial Teaching Strategies) (DARTTS), Roswell and Chall, Riverside Pub. Co. (Houghton Mifflin), 8420 Bryn Mawr Ave., Chicago, IL 60631

Center for Innovative Teaching Experiences (C.I.T.E.) Learning Styles Instrument, Babich et al., Wichita Public Schools, Murdock Teacher Center.

The Learning Channel Preference Checklist (LCPC), Lynn O'Brian, Specific Diagnostic Studies, 11600 Nebel Street, Suite 130, Rockville, MD 20852. (301) 468-6616.

TESTING SITES

-Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (call local office)
-Children's Hospital, Boston
-American International College, Curtis Blake Center, Springfield Tel: (413) 737-7000

ORGANIZATIONS

Orton Dyslexia Society, 724 York Rd., Towson, MD 21204. (800) 222-3123

Learning Disabilities Association of America, 4156 Library Road, Pittsburgh, PA, 15234-1390. (412) 341-1515

Literacy Volunteers of Massachusetts, 15 Court Square, Boston, MA 02108. Roberta Soolman, Executive Director, (617) 367-1313

Literacy Volunteer Network, c/o Private Industry Council/Regional Employment Board, 1350 Main St., 3rd fl., Springfield, MA 01103. (413) 787-1547

Literacy Hotline (for referrals and information), Michele Verni, Coordinator, (800) 447-8844

Workplace Education Program
International Language Institute at Hampden Papers, Inc.

INTAKE FORM

Name _____

School Background

1.How did you do in school? What grade did you finish?

2.What were your strongest subjects? Your weakest?

3.Were you in any special classes?

4.What activities did you enjoy in school?

Personal Background

1.How big is your family? (parents, siblings)

2.Does anyone in your family have health/work/school problems?

3.What's your job? How do you like it?

4.What jobs have you had before? Why did you leave?

5.What are your hobbies/how do you spend your time?

Lifeskills

1.Are you a reader? What do you read?

2.Can you write months, days of the week, alphabet?

3.How is your spelling? Writing? Math?

4.Do you keep a checkbook, or pay the family bills?